

--- River's Edge Echo ---

Published by **FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SARATOGA, WYO.** February 2020

Schedule of Events:

Sunday:

Adult Bible Study—8:10 a.m.

Worship Service—9:30 a.m.

Fellowship time—10:30 a.m.

Wednesday:

Prayer Shawl Ministry—9:30 a.m.

Choir Practice—6:30 p.m.

Second Thursday of Month

Presbyterian Women—1:30 p.m.

Session meeting 2nd Thurs. 4:30

Saratoga Presbyterian Church

The Rev. Steven Niccolls, pastor

Corner Third & Bridge Sts.

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Session—Ken Collamer, Richard Rakness, Vickie Stolns, John Wickstrom, Herman Strickland.

Treasurer—Sonja Collamer

Financial Sect.—Anne Wickstrom

Deacons—Carlene Sjoden, Sandy Willford, Laurie Johnston, Susan Collamer, Anne Wickstrom, Becky Strickland.

Session Committees:

Building & Grounds—Joe Jones

Christian Education—Sonja Collamer & Vickie Stolns

Congregational Care—all Session members & Deacons

Endowment—Sonja Collamer

Evangelism/Membership—Ken Collamer

Memorial—Vickie Stolns

Mission & Benevolence—Vickie Stolns

Worship & Music—John Wickstrom.

Leaders:

Adult Bible Study—Sonja Collamer

Choir Director—Laurie Johnston

Music—Laurie Johnston, Carol Clemetson, Peggy Hiser, Cindy Kessler, Teense Willford, David Weir

Memorial Committee—Marty Perue, Carol Jo Jones, Vickie Stolns

Prayer Shawl Ministry—Barb Johnson, founder; Peggy Hiser

Presby. Women—Emily Niccolls

Prayer Chain—**Sherry Parlow: 326-3369**

Corporate Officers—Joe Jones, Dick Perue, Sonja Collamer, John Wickstrom

"River's Edge Echo"—Dick Perue

Bringing more folks to Church is joint effort

First of all, I want to emphasize what is mentioned in the Session Highlight section. Our Session and Deacons have listed as a couple of their goals to increase our membership roll and increase our weekly Sunday attendance average. They also want to see an increase in participation in other church activities such as Bible studies. This will happen only if all of us will step out in faith and invite our non-church attending friends to come and see what is happening at First Presbyterian.

This month I am departing from using the Lectionary as the guide for my sermon passages and will work on two different themes. First, I will revisit and update a sermon I did back in February 2016 on the heroic action of "The Four Chaplains." For those of you who are not familiar with their story, on February 3, 1943 an army transport ship was sunk by a German U boat. Those four chaplains remained on the ship helping others get into life rafts, and even gave their own life vests to others



who did not have theirs with them. As Scripture says, "No greater love has a person than he gives up his life for another. The other theme I will work on is resuming my goal to do at least one sermon on every book of the Bible. Finally, I want to point out two activities that will take place the last week of this month. First on Wednesday, February 26, we will have our annual Ash Wednesday service, including the imposition of the ashes. That service will take place at 7:00 p.m. in the sanctuary. The other activity will be a Bible study on some of the Psalms that are part of the Lectionary during the Season of Lent. Stay tune for exact times for those studies.

—Blessings,
Pastor Steve



Pastor Niccolls leading prayer at annual meeting.

Scripture Passages for February

Feb. 2—John 15:13-17

Feb. 9—Songs 2:1-13

Feb. 16—II John 4-11

Feb. 23—III John 5-11

Feb. 26—II Corinthians 5:20-6:10

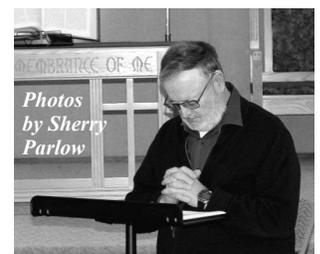
(OK so I am reverting back to the Lectionary on this one.)

"Lent is a time for discipline, for confession, for honesty, not because God is mean or fault-finding or finger-pointing but because he wants us to know the joy of being cleaned out, ready for all the good things he now has in store."—N.T. Wright

Annual meeting notes reports, finances, pastor

Annual reports, financial review and pastor's terms of call highlighted the annual meeting of the congregation and corporation of the First Presbyterian Church of Saratoga Sunday, Jan. 26, 2020, following worship service.

Those attending received a printed booklet which featured information concerning: church officers, pastor's report, membership and evangelism, Deacon's doings, building and grounds, worship, United Presbyterian Women, prayer chain, memorial committee, "River's Edge Echo", choir, prayer shawl, Christian education and active membership roll. For those not receiving the annual report, copies may be obtained by contacting Pastor Steve Niccolls at church office or calling 1 (307) 326-5337 or 1 (510) 852-3721 or electronically at Ipcsaratoga@union-tel.com.



Clerk of Session John Wickstrom in prayer

—Annual Meeting . . . (continued on page 3)

Session stresses co-operation, goals, membership

The Session had two meetings in January. The first meeting occurred on January 11 and was a joint session with the Deacons. At that meeting, we reviewed the roles of the Deacons and Session and had some discussions addressing concerns that were raised.

The two groups also listed a couple goals for 2020. Among those goals were to increase our membership by four new members, which would raise our total membership roll to 55. There was a second goal to raise our average weekly attendance to 40. At the end of 2019 the average weekly attendance was just under 35. (34.8 for those who need exact numbers.) They also listed, as a goal, to increase participation in other church activities such as Bible study attendance.

Then on January 16, the Session met for their regular monthly meeting. The two major items that were discussed was approving the 2020 budget. The budget is \$77,490. This number is slightly higher than listed in the Annual Report due to Session voting to give Pastor Steve a \$1,200 raise in salary this coming year, pending the congregation's approval at the Annual Meeting.

The second major item at the meeting was updating church policies. Many of the policies have not been updated in over 30 years. Some of the major changes were to reflect that fact that under the Presbyterian Church ((USA's) *Book of Order*, there is no longer an inactive member category and a few other changes due to positions no longer being in place, to reflect changes in current practice to reflect the church now offers the pastor use of a manse. —Submitted by Pastor Steve Niccolls.

Presbyterian Women lower price of pecans, cookbooks

Announcement was made this week that members of the Presbyterian Women of the Platte Valley voted at their Jan. 9th meeting to lower the price of remaining pecans to 2 bags for \$15 and the cost of cookbooks to \$5 each.

According to recent published information, Presbyterian Women is comprised of women from Saratoga and Encampment. They meet monthly (*except in July when members are encouraged to attend Rancher's Camp Meeting*) on the second Thursday of the month for a time of Bible study, refreshments and fellowship in the Encampment Presbyterian Church Fellowship Hall except for June when they meet in Saratoga.

Meetings include signing and sending cards to the infirm and bereaved of Saratoga and Encampment Presbyterian Churches. Meetings also include "Horizon Report",—the magazine of PWUSA—Least Corn Offering and prayers and devotions. In 2019 attendees continued and concluded "God's Promise: I am With You". At the start of 2020 they began the lesson entitled, "Love Carved in Stone", a fresh look at the Ten Commandments.

Money is raised through various means including pecan sales and this year a new cookbook with proceeds going to both churches, Indian National Inland Mission, Syrian Women and Ministerial Alliance plus local charities. PW take several special offerings including thanks and birthday offerings. In October the group hosted a birthday party at the Saratoga Care Center.

Presbyterian Women is open to all valley women. Persons wishing to attend the meeting and need a ride to Encampment are encouraged to contact or phone Frances Kirby—326-5494, Carol Clemetson—336-8633 or Emily Niccolls—1 510 685-0604.

—Information provided by Emily Niccolls and Frances Kirby

Unconditional Love

February is the "love" month. Remember grade school, when you would make Valentine cards for your classmates? Maybe just for a few special ones, those you wanted to "Be My Valentine"? The 'downside' was that you didn't always GET Valentines from the ones you most wanted to... And some of your classmates were probably disappointed that they didn't get one from YOU! Even as adults, some of us have probably been 'disappointed in love'. But there is One who wants to be OUR Valentine and wants us to be HIS! He loves us unconditionally and He will never stop loving us.

I recently re-read the story of the prodigal son [Luke 15:11-32] and was struck all over again by the response of the father when he sees his son coming down the road to home. Here is the part of the story that most impresses me:



"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"

This was the son who demanded his share of the inheritance while his father was still alive, and then went off and squandered it in 'loose living'. He wound up feeding pigs, who were getting better feed than he was! When it finally dawns on him that he could eat better as a servant in his father's household, he heads home, with no idea what kind of reception to expect. All he is hoping for is that his father will take pity on him and give him a place with the other servants. But what an incredible scene when his father sees him coming and RUNS to meet him and greet him with the greatest of affection! Does it fill you with joy and a 'warm fuzzy' feeling when you read about that homecoming? How can it NOT?

The father in the story, of course, represents God, our Heavenly Father, who will *always* welcome any of us who stray, even a little bit, from His presence. That is good, but actually, God has no choice; He is not merely "loving", but the Bible says He IS "love". Dr. David Jeremiah says that God "is the very embodiment of love, the personification of love, the essence of all that love means... As we look at this part of God's nature, we discover a Creator who loves us as we are. [He] never asks us to get rid of our baggage before He accepts us... [He] looks at us just as we are, and He says, 'I love you'."

During this, the "love" month, let us pause now and then to remember, and experience, and appreciate – and RETURN that unconditional love of our Heavenly Father, our Father who IS LOVE!

[Submitted by Virginia Senne; quote from The God You May Not Know by Dr. David Jeremiah]



Cameron Collamer joins relief effort

Cameron Collamer recently returned from West Palm Beach, Fla., where he had joined a relief effort to assist with a building project as a part of the college ministry C4 in Laramie.

He shared his experience as thus:

“The roaring 20’s really kicked off with a whirlwind of adventure for the C4 gang. As the clock struck 5 A.M. on January 12 most of the crew (**pictured above with Cameron on far right**) was making their way towards DIA to fly on down to West Palm Beach (which is ironically located on the east coast).

“After grabbing luggage and making the hour drive, we arrived at Ocean View United Methodist Church where the gang slept for the week. With no hesitation everyone threw on their bathing suits and sprinted across the street and directly into the warm ocean waters! There were some odd looks from the locals why a random group was swimming in waters that were only 70 degrees, but we enjoyed every moment!

“Feeling refreshed after an ocean bath we were ready to tackle the week. Monday was filled with helping the Habitat ReStore; a sort of goodwill store where the proceeds help fund staff and project materials. There was a ton of organizing, lifting, and rearranging.

“The rest of the week took us an hour west into the town of Belle Glade. Tuesday and Wednesday were spent helping prepare Habitat’s new outreach office. The space will be utilized in helping families go through the application process and homeowner’s classes. This is to help spark long term community change. Eager to start swinging some hammers and hear the buzz of a saw, everyone was ecstatic to help build a back shed, front porch, and replace the fascia on the roof.

“This was the first time Habitat hosting a group in this particular region and seemed pleased with how easy going and hard working a group of good ol’ Cowboys and Cowgirls could be. Overall it was an incredible week of making ripples that will carry on for years to come. The team gained new skills, built new relationships, experienced God in new ways, and brought back new inspiration.

“Though the warmth of Florida was incredible, we look forward in continuing growing in our faith and spreading the Love of Christ back in the 307. We are grateful to have had this opportunity and thank all the wonderful supporters and caring individuals who helped make this possible!”

Funding for the trip came from generous donations throughout Wyoming, including local folks and the Saratoga Presbyterian Church mission fund.

The C4 web site notes: “United Presbyterian Church (UPC) in Laramie, Wyo., has a thriving College Ministry called C4. C4 stands for Connect Four, Student, Church, Community & God. The mission with C4 is to help kids and a positive church experience during their college years and to help them learn more about and to experience God’s love. . . .

“. . . and that during the university semesters, C4 offers a mid-week home cooked meal and a contemporary worship service on Wednesday nights beginning at 7. Many C4 participants have shared that this is an oasis in their weeks. It is a great time to be together and to be fed both physically and spiritually.”

Annual meeting . . . (continued from front page)

Treasurer Sonja Collamer informed the congregation of the budget, which is the responsibility of the Session to prepare and approve. She noted that total budget expenses are \$78,990.00, a \$2,163.00 increase over the 2019 budget. Her report reads, “In 2019 we withdrew \$3,000 from investment accounts to pay for chip seal treatment of the parking area. From the general checking account we paid nearly \$500 for the anti-slip treatment to our stairs and the ramp into the Fellowship Hall. . . . Also from the checking account came \$1,050 for the Website development and hosting for the year, this was posted to “Advertising”. Website hosting is an ongoing expense and accounts for the increase in the “Advertising” budget.”

By a unanimous vote the terms of call to the Rev. Steven R. Niccolls was approved with an increase in compensation as thus: salary—\$35,200; pension/medical—\$17,500; total—\$52,700; an increase of \$2,700. The terms of call also include the use of the manse (valued at \$12,000 per year) and two weeks of study leave (including two Sundays) and 30 days of vacation (including four Sundays). Study leave and vacation time is Presbyterian minimums, as is the reimbursable expenses, according to the annual report.

In other news it was reported that newly-elected session member Virginia Senne has submitted a letter of resignation and a new elder must be selected soon to fill the vacancy. No reason for the resignation was given.

Corporate officer for 2020 are Dick Perue, president; Joe Jones, vice-president; John Wickstrom, secretary and Sonja Collamer, treasurer.

New Session members and 2020 Deacons are listed in the “Echo” schedule of events on the front page. Committee heads and leaders of various groups will be announced soon and the list will appear in coming issues of this newsletter.—*Compiled by Dick Perue*

— DEACON'S DOINGS —

A joint meeting between Deacons and the Session was held on Sat. Jan. 11, 2020 at 9 am. After discussing the roles of each group, we set three preliminary goals to "grow" our membership and participation in our church. The Deacons felt this was a valuable time of meshing our ideas.

The Deacons met following the joint meeting. Carlene Sjoden was elected co-moderator for 2020 and will report to Session. Anne Wickstrom was elected Secretary/Treasurer/Reporter. She will write for the River's Edge Echo. We are still in need of another co-moderator.

PLEASE NOTE: The Deacons feel that the weekly Sunday Fellowship after worship service should be the responsibility of the whole congregation, not just the Deacons. When a member of the congregation signs up for fellowship, they would set up the coffee, punch, plates, etc. before the service, serve their refreshments and then clean up afterwards. If no one signs up for a Sunday, then there could still be fellowship, but there would be **NO** coffee or refreshments. Hopefully this will end the practice of only the Deacons working in the kitchen and give everyone the chance to pitch in.

The Deacons will still set up, serve and clean up on the third Sunday of each month for the congregation's pot luck. The Deacons will also set up, serve, provide refreshments and clean up on any fifth Sunday for "Donut" Sunday (March, May, August, November). The Deacons will continue to stock the kitchen with supplies.

The next Deacons' meeting will be held on Feb. 9th, 2020 after worship services.

We are sending prayers and get well wishes to Teense and Sandy Willford and Vickie Stolns!—Submitted by Anne Wickstrom

Ways to contact Pastor Steve

**Normal drop-in office hours at Church are
Monday-Thursday 8:00 - 12:00**

Meetings and Appointments at Any Time

Office phone is 326-5337, Home phone 326-3163,

Cell phone (510) 825-3721

srnicolls@att.net* or *1pcsaratoga@union-tel.com

Or leave note on white board on office door or on desk



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Adult Bible Study

We continue to discuss the writings of John, the Apostle, over our coffee cups in the Fellowship Hall before Worship. It is a little early in the day for me, but I find that the time spent with my fellow seekers in studying and sharing is so rewarding that I continue to set my alarm earlier on Sunday mornings.

This past week we considered chapters 16 and 17 which continue to cover the time in the upper room after the last supper, when Jesus is giving final instructions to his disciples and says: "Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about my Father." (John 16:25) and then he does. After this, the disciples say at the end of 16:29 "...this makes us believe that you came from God."

Chapter 17 consists entirely of Jesus' longest prayer in which he prays for Himself, His Disciples, and All Believers.

Set your alarm and come join us in study of John on Sunday morning...the coffee is on! —Submitted by Sonja Collamer

Children's Bible Story Study

The Children's Bible Story Study continued Jan. 5th with the lesson, "Swords into Plows" in Isaiah 2:1-5. We learned that God will settle things between many people. Nations will resolve their conflicts and unite in peace.

The lesson on Advent was interesting and we learned we could do this worship in our homes as well as during the Advent celebrations and traditions with our families. The highlights of the lesson being Hope, Joy, Love and Peace.

The Bible verse we are learning about for the next few weeks is "Let's Walk by the Lord's Light" in Isaiah 2:5.

The next stories we will study will be those of Mary, Joseph, Jesus and the Shepherds which are found in the Gospels. These Bible stories will take us through Feb. 9th. Each story has a leaflet that the children are encouraged to take home.—Submitted by Gloria Rakness

Prayer Chain No. is 326-3369